



Cowboy Guard

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Cowboy Guard

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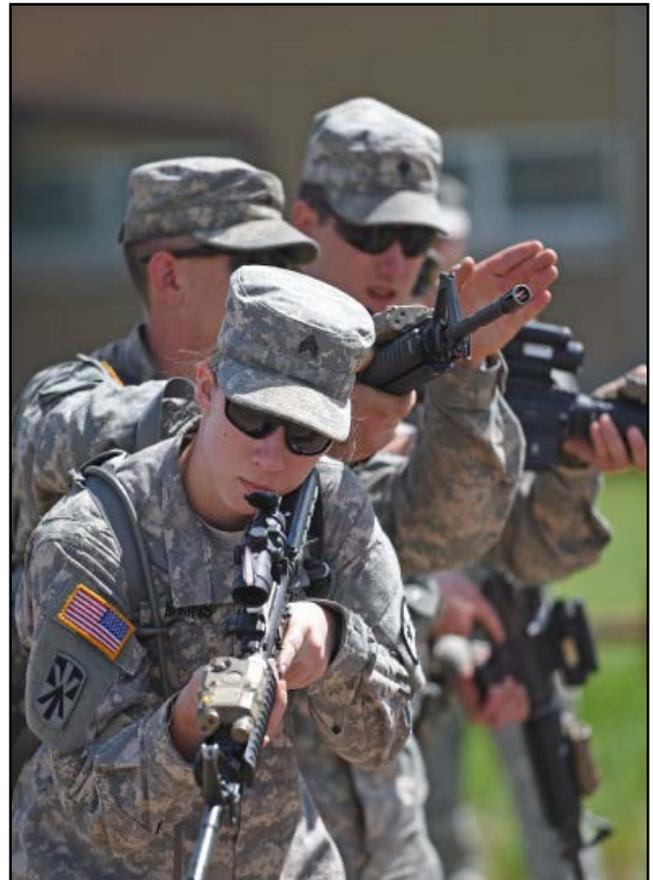


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On the cover

Wyoming Army National Guard Sgt. Shelby Atkins leads her squad through an urban operations training exercise at the infantry qualification course at the 213th Regional Training Institute May 18. Atkins became the U.S. Army's first female 11B NCO. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jimmy McGuire



Wyoming welcomes back the infantry

WyNG soldiers earn blue cords at Guernsey

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Jimmy McGuire
Wyoming Military Department Public Affairs

There are a few firsts involved with standing up Wyoming's new infantry unit, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry, among them—the first female non-commissioned officer to become a U.S. Army infantryman, the first infantry unit in Wyoming in more than 100 years, and one of the first National Guard classes to undergo High Physical Demands Tasks testing.

Thirty-three infantrymen, from an initial 46 hopefuls, graduated the two transitional classes, 11B Military Occupational Specialty Transition, for ranks E-4 and below, and 11B Infantry Transition Course, for ranks E-5 through E-7. The courses were conducted by staff from the 233rd Regional Training Institute, Camp Robinson, Arkansas, and from the Alaska Army National Guard, and held at the Wyoming Army National Guard's 213th RTI, in Guernsey.

The infantry unit will be stationed in Evanston and Afton, Wyoming, and will replace the 1041st Multi-role Bridge Company, which, as was announced last year, is being deactivated. Most of the soldiers reclassifying their MOS were in that unit, in addition to volunteers from throughout the Cowboy State.

"We all came from different units and at first it was a little bit awkward because we're all leaving the Army families we're used to and that we've been with for years," said Sgt. Travis Scharosch. "But in this training we had to rely on each other a lot to do this job and it really built us together. We're a whole new family now. The brotherhood here in the infantry is very strong and it's going to be a great unit."

Maj. Gen. Luke Reiner, Wyoming's adjutant general, addressed the graduating class at its commencement ceremony. "It's not lost on me that this wasn't something you signed up for when you first put on the uniform. It's a result of things happening at a national level, and now we've lost an engineer unit and gained an infantry unit," Reiner said. "What strikes me as so significant about today, is each one of you volunteered to change your MOS; you all stepped to the plate and said 'Yeah, I'll be a combat infantryman,' and then you met the standard."



Wyoming Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Anthony Lopez assembles and disassembles a MK-19 machine gun at 213th Regional Training Institute, as part of the two-week 11B transition course in May. Lopez and 32 other Wyoming Guardsmen became infantry qualified for the state's new unit, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry.

The general also congratulated Sgt. Shelby Atkins, of Cheyenne, on being the first female 11B NCO in U.S. Army history.

"Congratulations on your accomplishment, and really, it's a national-level accomplishment. Your effort and your focus and your poise got you here," Reiner said. "The bottom line is, the Army invented the standard, and every soldier in this formation met that standard, so good on ya. I'm kind of glad it happened in Wyoming. Because there are a lot of firsts for women in Wyoming."

That standard, according to 1st Sgt. Brian Smoke, chief Instructor for infantry specialties from the RTI at Camp Robinson, was only slightly different from any of the classes he's taught in the 18 months he's been in the lead role. His nine-instructor team included four trainers from Alaska where Wyoming's new infantry company's lineage resides.

"One difference between this and any other class we teach, is it was the first time we had a mobile training team. We go by a POI, a program of instruction, and



Above: Wyoming Army National Guard Pfc. Albert Bridge throws a 1-pound training grenade 35 meters during the High Physical Demands Tasks test at Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center, May 14, 2016.

Right: Wyoming Army National Guard Spcs. Jared Langi and Gentry Chakmakian, right, learn and practice urban operations at the infantry qualification course at 213th Regional Training Institute, May 18, 2016. The crawl and walk phases of training prepared them for the run at a culminating field exercise.

that doesn't change anywhere we go or in any of the places this is taught. The only thing that has changed is, as of April 1, we integrated the High Physical Demands Tasks testing," Smoke said of the nine-event evaluation that tests physical and mental strength early in the training cycle.

Smoke said this was the first class he and his battalion have put through the graded test that ended training, after a couple of days, for a handful of Wyoming's student-soldiers.

The first sergeant made it clear the re-class courses were intended to teach the basics.

"They finish with a very basic knowledge of being an

infantryman," Smoke said. "They will start building on that knowledge when they get back to their unit."

Honor grad Staff Sgt. Jesus Aguilera, said he re-classed from his artillery MOS and is pleased to know "both worlds" now.

"Infantry used to call us for rounds, and now we'll be the ones calling for rounds. It will be a different side of the world," he said.

Capt. Joshua Marshall is the commander of the new company. He observed his troops during the training and is impressed with his new formation.

"I think they are going to be a great asset to the state. They're motivated, dedicated, good troops," he said. "I don't think the average citizen could comprehend what they just went through."

Although the unit is training together now, its activation ceremony will take place in July during a Wyoming Army National Guard-wide formation at Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center. √



Equality State provides Army's first female infantry sergeant

By Maj. Tom Blackburn
Wyoming Military Department Public Affairs

Sgt. Shelby Atkins is the first. Infantry units have existed since the birth of the Army in 1775 and National Guard in 1636.

Every soldier that has served in that job field has been a man. Until Atkins.

Atkins, a Wyoming Army National Guard soldier, recently completed an infantry transition course at Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center. She was the first woman to be qualified as an infantry soldier in the United States military.

"The fact that it has never been open to females before, the opportunity came and I didn't think it was one I could pass up," Atkins said after her graduation. "I didn't know what it will be like for females in combat or in the infantry, but what better way to find out than by doing it."

With a recent addition of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry in the western part of the state, a need arose for soldiers to fill the slots. The opportunity for Atkins came when the Department of Defense mandated all combat positions in the U.S. military, such as infantry and tank crewmen, be made available to women.

"It didn't really start out as something I thought of doing," she said. However, after she returned from a mission with her former unit, the 133rd Engineer Company, to Tunisia, her team members brought up the idea of volunteering with the new infantry company. Knowing her interest, several leaders in her unit

asked if she would consider going infantry.

"When I was asked if I had a female who could volunteer for



Wyoming Army National Guard Sgt. Shelby Atkins hits the ground during the High Physical Demands Tasks test at Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center May 14. Atkins became the U.S. Army's first female 11B NCO. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jimmy McGuire

infantry, I said I'd talk to Sgt. Atkins," said Capt. Michael McGee, former commander of the 133rd Engineers. "She's a team player, great attitude, physically she set the standard, hard worker. I knew she could do it and do it well."

She had her first drill with the

unit soon after that talk. Then a professional obstacle arose. During that weekend she was notified a new staff sergeant position was available back in the 133rd. That would be a promotion for her.

"Initially I did pick the promotion because that is what I was working towards. With the promotion system, I didn't know what it would be like, I knew (the infantry company) had a lot of (staff sergeants)." But she decided the promotion could wait.

"I just wanted the experience really," she said. "Being able to see what I can do with the infantry and help with the integration process."

Changing mindsets or stereotypes helped keep her motivated during the two weeks of training.

"I thought I'd be an asset to help with the change. I wanted to show it's not going to be so bad with a female next to you in the field. It doesn't have to be a big deal as some people would say."

With blue infantry cord in hand, Atkins may have been the first, but she isn't focused on that. It is time to help the unit stand up and start training.

"I just want to keep rolling," she said. "I don't think I'm the only one that could have done it. I was just in the right place at the right time. I'm looking forward to see what women can do in the infantry to change stereotypes. I don't know where it is going from here, just glad to be a part of it." √

Dam it

On land & in the air guardsmen shuffle sand to keep Saratoga dry

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Jimmy McGuire
Wyoming Military Department Public Affairs

Incident command team members feel confident reinforcement for a failed headgate and levee that threatened Saratoga with what could have been a severe flood event had it not been discovered and repaired has occurred.

Technical assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provided personnel from various agencies, including the Wyoming Office of Homeland Security, the Wyoming National Guard's Army aviation assets and upward of 80 soldiers and airmen on the ground and in the air May 22-24 with information necessary to help avert a potential severe flood event.

Wyoming Office of Homeland Security Director Guy Cameron said he and Maj. Gen. Luke Reiner, Wyoming's adjutant general, along with other state agencies, began discussing the state's flood season strategy several months earlier.

"The Guard is our horsepower, our muscle," Cameron said. "We've had two events already this season. We

were in a good position to assist communities with the potential for high snow melt."

The initial plan for Saratoga was to assist with sandbagging efforts, reinforcing walls around the town from previous flood events and bring the river's banks up to 10 feet high.

What wasn't planned for and what was reported on May 20 was a failing headgate on Boozer Creek that could create a risk of redirection of the North Platte River into Saratoga.

The problem then became what to do about it.

The river was so swollen in the area it was deemed inaccessible from the ground. The idea to airlift heavy sandbags and drop them on the levee was born, and for the first time in Wyoming, executed.

"I didn't even know we had this (ability)," UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter pilot Chief Warrant Officer 2 Steve Atencio said, referring to the 110-foot cable and remote cargo hook used to pick up and deliver tons of sandbags to the levee via helicopter. "We do



long lines with buckets, but never with sling loads,” he added, referring to the 80-foot-long cable used to drop buckets of water on wild fires and the 10-foot cable normally used for sling loading operations.

Nevertheless, it was estimated that by the third day of air operations, 100,000 sandbags had been delivered and strategically placed on the levee to bolster its effectiveness and to limit its potential for disaster until it can be reconstructed permanently.

May 24 was the last day of air operations in Saratoga and two National Guard teams that have been on the ground filling and placing sandbags since May 19 were also deactivated. Homeland security personnel and others remained on site a bit longer for close out procedures, said Lt. Col. Paul Phillips, the guard’s joint task force commander for the mission.

“We’ve got everything around town built up to 10 feet,” he said. “But June is expected to be the high water mark. We don’t anticipate it, but worst case scenario, if the river goes to 10.5, we may be back.”

Cameron added the work done during the mission has been fruitful. “We’ll be in a good position to come back and support communities in crisis.”



Deployment spurs hunt for resiliency

By Capt. Megan Hoffmann
Wyoming Military Department Public Affairs

Sarah Huntington and her husband, Michael, a staff sergeant in the Wyoming Air National Guard, are becoming experts at managing resiliency; three deployments and three kids within the last 10 years have spurred their will to persevere – their will to bounce back when things get tough.

“It’s tough leaving your family for any length of time. Being in the military, you are trained to be resilient, but it takes on a whole new dynamic when you involve the family, and especially the kids,” Mike said.

“Knowing that I made sure my family had all the resources they would need before I left (for deployment) has taken a load of stress off my mind, and I know that Sarah and the kids are in good

hands on the home front, which allows me to focus on doing my job over here, and in turn being able to look forward to the reunion in a few months,” he said, discussing his preparation for and carrying out his deployment mission.

On April 6, Sarah and the kids took Mike to Cheyenne, said their goodbyes and sent him overseas to serve in Operation Freedom’s Sentinel. Sarah wasn’t sure how the kids would do with Mike gone as he has never left for more than a week or so.

“The kids did OK for the first week. We were busy, and kept a schedule which really helped. Since then, (my oldest daughter) has cried herself to sleep a couple of nights. It’s been hard,” Sarah said a month into the deployment.

Sarah knows all too well about the struggles of being deployed and missing the ones you love – she has endured it twice herself. However, having children now brings new challenges.

“As a single parent with a spouse deployed, you can’t let stuff get to you. You can’t collapse because he is gone. You have to find ways to carry on. For us, it meant journaling. It has helped the kids write down their thoughts. Now they come to me asking if they can journal,” said Sarah referring to how she and the kids remain resilient.

“Keeping in touch during periods of separation, in such a variety of ways, helps everyone feel more connected, and for kids this helps to lower their anxiety levels about the separation” said Chrissy Renfro, Wyoming Army National Guard director of psychological health.

“Another way parents can help their children cope and stay resilient is to give them the freedom to express their feelings about the separation; fears, questions, anger, sadness. Let them know it’s OK to feel this way and that you are there for them regardless. Sometimes kids also benefit from seeing a tangible representation of the time it will take until Mom or Dad comes home, whether that’s a calendar or a paper chain with each link representing a day,” she said. ∞

Staff Sgt. Michael Huntington, his wife Sarah, and children; Hadassah, Obadiah and Miriam take part in the Yellow Ribbon briefings in February 2016 prior to his deployment in support of Operation Freedom’s Sentinel. The family focuses on resiliency. Courtesy photo



Wyoming Air National Guard aces eight C-130H launch

Story and photos by Master Sgt. Leisa Grant
153rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

All eight of the C-130 Hercules cargo aircraft assigned to the 153rd Airlift Wing, Wyoming Air National Guard, took to the air for a historic event May 14. The mission was designed to validate the standards tactical airlift units are required to maintain for mass airdrop capabilities. The timing of the event was also important.

“Planning began months prior to execution,” said Lt. Col. Ryan Scofield, mission commander and lead pilot.

Planning a large formation requires careful coordination with multiple parties, he said. This involved meetings with Air Traffic Control to clear air space, working with the Small Air Terminal for the loading and recovery of 16 airdrop platforms and parachutes and coordinating with Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants for 224,000 pounds of fuel. Additionally, military leadership provided guidance and approvals.

“Having buy-in from maintenance and their tireless efforts was the lynchpin in this operation,” said Scofield.

Lt. Col. Todd Davis, 153rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron commander, said maintenance crews played a crucial part in the event, staying late into the evening prior to the exercise to ensure a flawless execution.

“Several factors went into making this a commendable feat. We recently transitioned from an active associate to a guard-only unit, which meant losing some critical maintenance manning,” he said.

“Couple that with the fact that we started planning

this over two months ago, the aircraft are 25 years old, all heavy maintenance inspections had to be completed prior to the event and our operational tempo being through the roof. It’s easy to see why getting all aircraft in the air is such a rare occurrence and a huge accomplishment for all involved personnel.”

At the end of the day there were many tired people around the base, but also many smiles.

“As mission commander for this historic event, I can say without reservation that this operation highlighted the absolute highest caliber of teamwork, cohesion, effort and professionalism in the 153rd Airlift Wing,” said Scofield. √



Members of the 153rd Airlift Wing, Wyoming Air National Guard, took part in a historic event May 14 when they successfully launched all eight assigned C-130H aircraft for a training mission. An operation on this scale has never occurred and took immense pre-planning and coordination months prior in order to accomplish.



After receiving fire mission data from the unit downrange, Wyoming Army National Guard Sgt. Kyle Kindle of Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center's Range Control maps the proposed route of artillery rounds from the gun to the "target box" for an artillery unit that is ready to fire at the north training area May 17. A test round is fired to determine the accuracy of the information before the mission may fully proceed.

Safety first on the Guernsey range

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Jimmy McGuire
Wyoming Military Department Public Affairs

Hundreds of soldiers and Marines from a handful of National Guard and active duty units fired thousands of artillery rounds at the massive impact area on Camp Guernsey's north training area in May.

It wasn't much different from other spring and summer weeks on the NTA, except for some additional personnel who are used to being on the breach end of a cannon rather than at the isolated Range Control building, a shack on a hill with a huge window overlooking the NTA, checking chattered azimuths gleaned from the steady radio traffic, and watching artillery batteries fire projectiles at assigned targets miles away.

Sometimes different is better.

When he's not commanding the state's new infantry company, Capt. Joshua Marshall works full time as the range operations officer at Camp Guernsey Joint

Training Center. He thought it might be beneficial to his range safety staff and to the Wyoming artillery units to combine some expertise during large multi-unit artillery exercises at Guernsey, and to add a "red leg" perspective to long-standing and effective safety procedures at range control.

"I think it needs to be a shared responsibility between our field artillery experts, our range safety and the units," Marshall continued. "Range Control is here to ensure we do everything safely. Anywhere else you go in the Army, safety procedures are on the unit, but we like to add that extra last margin of safety and minimize risk."

First Lt. Craig Heilig, fire direction officer from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery, was one of the invited artillerymen. He said Guernsey needs its fortified safety rules because of the unique "train as you fight," credo, a practice that

makes it very appealing to artillery units; but a practice that adds a degree of difficulty and planning to each fire mission. Unlike many training areas, where coordinates are pre-planned from a specific firing point to a known target, shooting from random points entails calculating each fire mission individually to hit a precise target, and therefore more coordination with the fire teams and range control.

“Like a battlefield, they can maneuver freely (in the training area) to many different firing positions. It can get hectic,” Heilig said of the training center’s benefit to units wanting a more realistic training experience. “They have a great safety program here, and seeing it from this side really helps make sense of it. Now I understand the why of what they do here, and now we can take it back to our units and explain the process and the why.”

Staff Sgt. Levi Jones, range control safety NCOIC, said it’s great having artillery experts in the mix and it enables him and his small crew to provide better service to the artillerymen using the ranges.

“We have three of us tracking a 50,000 acre, 3-D battlespace,” Jones said. “We’ve had 2,200 rounds fired this week and 24-hour ops. We’ve had four units firing and lots of subordinate units and people stacked upon people out here.

“We get to tap into this wealth of artillery knowledge we have in this state and get a better idea of what the soldiers who shoot at Camp Guernsey want and expect. I’d recommend we make this standard,” Jones, a former infantryman said. “Across the board in the military we speak a lot of languages—most MOS specific—I’m learning (artillery) but I’m not fluent.”

Heilig said he and Staff Sgt. Daniel Hillshafer, operations NCO from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 115th Field Artillery Brigade, and a conduit with some of the units on the ground during the experiment, would be reporting their observations in regard to range safety at the training area.

Who knows, maybe it will result in a couple of extra chairs delivered to the shack on the hill? 



Left: Staff Sgt. Daniel Hillshafer, left, operations NCO from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 115th Field Artillery Brigade focuses on the “target box” on the impact area at Camp Guernsey north training area range control May 17.

Below: Staff Sgt. Levi Jones of Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center’s Range Control, takes a “Charlie call” from an artillery unit that is ready to fire at the north training area May 17. Coordinates, distance, munitions and weapon system data, among other details, are all carefully logged and coordinated to ensure rounds land where they are supposed to.



Wyoming soldiers gain cultural insight during Tunisia training

By Staff Sgt. Meredith Vincent
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

Nine members from the Wyoming Army National Guard's 133rd Engineering Company returned home in late April from Tunisia, after spending two weeks participating in the Humanitarian Mining Action Program.

The Humanitarian Mining Action Program is designed to aid Africa in de-mining operations and improvised explosive device threat awareness. To do this, the continent was divided into five regions; Tunisia was selected to host a training center for the northern region. That decision proved to be serendipitous, as Tunisia, located on the northern tip of Africa, is Wyoming's state partnership country.

"This was the initial ground-breaking trip to go over and do the dirt work to build the training lanes for where they're going to do the different actions," said 133rd Commander Capt. Michael McGee. "We worked directly with the Tunisians. Our guys provided expertise on employment of the equipment. All that through a pretty severe language barrier."

Arabic is the official national language of Tunisia, and French is very commonly spoken as well. While many of the officers in the Tunisian army spoke English, the junior soldiers did not. This meant the Wyoming soldiers had to rely largely on a translator. However, with the team split up into different areas and only the one translator available, they realized their mission would be much more difficult.

The team's mission was not to perform the actual work, but instead to train their counterparts on the work. Spc. Shannon Morris, a horizontal engineer, said holding back and learning to communicate with their Tunisian peers was one of the biggest challenges of the trip.

"We just wanted to get up there in the equipment and just get it done," said Morris. "But we obviously couldn't do that and we had to slow down and teach them. And it was frustrating but was worth it, because then finally toward the end, they started seeing what we were talking about and understanding."



In addition to being lost in translation, there was a decidedly large gap in engineering knowledge between the two groups.

Wyoming Army National Guard engineers of the 133rd Engineer Company directing equipment operation with the Tunisian 61st Engineers during construction of training lanes at the Center of Excellence EOD of Tunisia in Bizerte, Tunisia as part of the Humanitarian Mining Action Program. Courtesy photo



Wyoming Army National Guard engineer Sgt. 1st Class William Bingman of 94th Troop Command directs debris removal with the Tunisian 61st Engineers during construction of training lanes at the Center of Excellence EOD of Tunisia in Bizerte, Tunisia, as part of the Humanitarian Mining Action Program. Courtesy photo

However, the National Guard soldiers took it all in stride.

“Once we got there it didn’t take us very long to realize that they were behind when it came to understanding heavy equipment engineering and how to do stuff,” said Spc. Derek Malo, also a horizontal engineer. “We had to attack it in a completely different way.”

While that meant utilizing an old-school, tried-and-true method, McGee said the results were well worth the trouble.

“We (did) a lot of hand and arm signals and trying to find ways to explain ourselves and also trying to find ways to understand what their questions were,” he said. “It definitely slows the process, but the intent is more than just accomplishing what we’re accomplishing. We’re doing that, with the added intent of building relationships that give us future doors of opportunity into the country.”

That was what made this trip unique, said Malo. It wasn’t just about the job – it was about fostering relationships.

“We (were there) for relations just as much as to help them with this project,” explained Malo. “I think that was more important than what we were doing.”

McGee said that realization was integral for his troops to understand.

“I told them, ‘If we come over here and get this project 100 percent completely done, working long hard days, and we damage relationships, that’s not a win for the program,’ he said. “A win for the program is, as much as we can get done, and building strong relationships. So I think once the guys re-shifted, understanding that, and they went back knowing that, and as they built relationships they learned a lot.”

A large portion of the group were specialists, junior soldiers who have not had many opportunities in leadership positions. However, Staff

Sgt. Eric Johnson, squad leader for the 133rd said working alongside the Tunisians, teaching them and mentoring them in their job field, proved to be a significant experience for the young soldiers.

“It pushed them in leadership and it pushed them in the actual job of being an engineer,” he said. “It will be good for them as leaders, having that experience.”

The opportunity to experience such a wildly different culture was what drove many of the soldiers to volunteer for the mission. The members who were ultimately chosen to go earned their way by scoring the highest physical fitness and marksmanship scores in the company. The strategy worked even better than McGee could have hoped.

“It was nice because we had a really good mix,” he said. “We had a female in the group. We had younger soldiers and guys with a lot more experience. I couldn’t have hand-picked a better group.”

McGee, who also serves as the director of the Wyoming State Partnership Program, returns to Tunisia often, said the mission was just proof of the state partnership program’s undeniable value.

“The great thing about the state partnership program is that it’s mutually beneficial between us and Tunisia,” McGee explained. “Obviously on the military side, Tunisia probably gains quite a bit more than we do in the exchange, just because of our history and our level of training and (engineering) competency.

“But,” he continued, “our guys gain experience from hearing what that country’s dealing with and that is, culturally, a huge thing.”

Wyoming National Guard program helps keep state safe

By Capt. Megan Hoffmann

Wyoming Military Department Public Affairs

Scenes from the show “Cops” may come to mind when thinking about drug search and seizure programs.

Images of a culprit handcuffed against the hood of a car while canines sniff the area for illicit drugs. The perp then attempts to flee, resulting in a physical fiasco and the probable use of a Taser.

In 1989 the National Guard started just such a drug program – minus much of the action painted above, but with added benefits to individual states and the nation. The Counter Drug Program linked community agencies and law enforcement with the aim of combating the manufacture, import and distribution of illicit drugs through various interdiction methods.

“In the state of Wyoming we currently have 10 criminal analysts on the Counter Drug Program, who work hand-in-hand with local law enforcement every day. These analysts, by request of local law enforcement agencies, go to work at the requesting agencies’ offices and support the building of criminal cases with a known drug nexus,” said Master Sgt. Diane Smith, counter drug coordinator for the Wyoming National Guard.

In 1991 the Wyoming CD program put down roots with ambitions of fostering coalitions within local law enforcement agencies. The program has placed analysts across the state while working with the Division of Criminal Investigation, Drug Enforcement Administration and the Wyoming Highway Patrol.

“The partnerships between local law enforcement, DCI and Counter Drug are a critical link in the identification, investigation and apprehension of those involved in the illegal trafficking of controlled substances in the state

of Wyoming. These relationships enhance the successful investigation and prosecution of those who are involved in the use and distribution of controlled substances,” said Forrest Williams, deputy director of operations for DCI.

Information sharing to aid in drug reduction, has become one of the top priorities of the CD analysts.

“Counter Drug analysts now make up the overwhelming majority of all intelligence analysts throughout Wyoming. That tells me we are effective. We are requested now more than ever before,” said 1st Sgt. Katherine Zwiefel, senior intelligence analyst for Wyoming’s CD program and 11-year program veteran, assigned to DCI, in Cheyenne.

In addition to analysts, law enforcement agencies may request CD interpreters to translate audio or written material, and aerial reconnaissance support from National Guard aircraft and crews.

It may not be in a drug bust scene on “Cops,” but CD provides an important piece in the investigative process.

“Counter Drug provides analysts to be assets in the office so that law enforcement agencies can spend more of their efforts on the actual ‘boots on the ground’ law enforcement that are out, actively working drug investigations,” said Zwiefel.

“Let’s get one thing straight, we are no Starsky and Hutch, driving in cool cars, kicking in doors, and serving arrest warrants. We support the law enforcement agencies. We never operate alone, we always have law enforcement supervision. The program is not really known by the public, and even military members think we are out serving warrants.

No one really knows what we do. We have some really cool equipment, training and skills sets to bring to the table and I love that about the program – it’s always changing,” said Smith.

Once a drug bust is made by local law enforcement, the case goes to the state crime lab for analyzing and verification, at which point a case is opened. The CD analysts then come in and help build the case so it can go to prosecution. Those drug seizure numbers are then counted in the CD program stats.

In 2015, the CD program supported a total of 193 law enforcement agencies’ cases dealing with drugs, vehicles, currency and weapons. Those cases seized more than 996 pounds of illicit drugs in Wyoming and resulted in the recovery of more than \$2.75 million in drug-money.

Statistics from the first half of 2016 show CD so far has aided in 152 investigations that yielded more than 3,400 pounds of illicit drugs and \$55 million.

“The reward of the outstanding work done by the Counter Drug is not just a benefit for those of us who work in the criminal justice system. All the citizens of Wyoming benefit because of the integral role Counter Drug plays in helping curb the flow of controlled substances and the negative side effects illegal controlled substances have on all our communities,” Williams said.

“Through our commitment to local law enforcement, the state and the nation, we get to directly influence the safety and health of our local community and beyond. It’s, truly, the best of the best,” said Zwiefel. √

In 1973 I was a young boy in Casper Wyoming enthralled by the black and white movie “Battle of Midway”. It was at that point in my life, when I hadn’t even started shaving yet, that I knew my life would be centered around the military.

At 17 you are required to have both parents sign for you to enlist in the United States military. I chose the Navy for my first hitch, reference paragraph above. My mother was all for it having raised an energetic rambunctious boy. My father on the other hand had reservations. In the end I signed up at age 16. Five days later I turned 17 and found myself in San Diego, California, with people yelling obscene names at me that I had never heard before.

Fast forward nearly 40 years and I find myself about to turn the reins of this great Guard force to Harold Pafford. This tenure has been bittersweet. We have been at war the entire time, deploying soldiers to Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan, Cuba, and the Kingdom of Bahrain. All deployments were successful, but sadly not without casualties.

Since I took over in late 2009 we

have lost two soldiers to combat, and 17 from non-combat injuries. Even if you made it back safely, the reintegration was difficult at best, nearly crushing at worse.

You cannot spend a life in an organization without feeling like the men and women you have worked with are family. When I think of the hard work and accomplishments of our family I am filled with pride. The Army has been in transition since Sept. 11, 2001. You have stepped up and fulfilled every mission handed to you. From running the “gateway to the Middle East,” to keeping the crucial supply routes open in Iraq, to serving in the mountains of Afghanistan, you have done it all with distinction, perseverance, and much self-sacrifice.

At 16 I couldn’t have scripted a better military career. I have served in the active Navy, Army, Navy Reserves, and the Guard. My next chapter finds me moving home with my wife Debbie, and spending time with my new granddaughter Parker Kay. I will be serving as the Operations Sergeant Major for Camp Guernsey.

**State Command Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj. Tom Allan**

From My Foxhole



At 59 my career is about over, but I find myself honored to serve with the hard working men and women of Camp Guernsey. I appreciate the support you have given me as Wyoming’s 8th State Command Sergeant Major. Your professionalism and work ethic has made my job much easier. So, thank you, and see you later.

Republic of Korea Ambassador for Peace Medals awarded



Among the hundreds of Wyoming Korean War veterans who received the Republic of Korea Ambassador for Peace Medal from Consul General Shin Chae-Hyun (right) and Wyoming Gov. Matthew H. Mead (left) on June 30, was Charles H. Brown, III (center).

The medal is a gift from the Republic of Korea to veterans who served in the war which lasted from 1950-53.

Medals were presented at ceremonies in Cheyenne, Casper and Lander. The Wyoming Veterans Commission organized the events.

Photo by Maj. Tom Blackburn

Meet the Military Department

Editor's note: Each quarter we spotlight two Wyoming Military Department employees by asking them a series of 10 questions. Meet Senior Airman Tyler Skala and Staff Sgt. Christopher Upton.

How long have you worked for the Wyoming Military Department?

Skala: I've worked for the Wyoming Air National Guard for almost four years, and with the State Department for almost two.

Upton: I have worked MDAY for just over 10 years, and as a federal technician for 3 years.

What is your current job title/position in the organization?

Skala: I am currently a firefighter for both the Wyoming Air National Guard and the state.

Upton: I am the budget analyst for the Construction and Facility Maintenance Office.

What other positions (to include prior military service) have you held in the organization?

Skala: Firefighter.

Upton: I joined into the guard as a 13W (Ballistic Meteorologist) then when the 115th FA switched to a Fires Brigade I re-classed to a 13D (Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data Specialist) and have been in that section ever since.

What is your favorite aspect about working for the organization?

Skala: I really enjoy getting to meet great people and learning new trades.

Upton: I love being a part of a great team and being able to do great things that have direct positive effects for the organization. Also I love being able to make a living while doing this, to provide for my family.

What is the best piece of advice (personal or career-wise) you have ever been given?

Skala: Set yourself up for success. Only you can control your destiny.

Upton: The best advice I received was from my brother who is a SFC in the Wyoming Army Guard. He was the person who first talked me into joining and said, "Don't settle and always push yourself further than you think you are capable." I always try to do and learn things I never thought I would be into and always surprise myself with the outcome.

What are your favorite hobbies?

Skala: I enjoy playing basketball, going to the gym and hunting.

Upton: I love being creative and building stuff out of wood. I also enjoy long - distance running, video games and sci-fi. I also collect vintage and new Star Wars memorabilia (yup, I am a nerd).

If you were granted three wishes for whatever you want, what would you ask for?

Skala: I'd ask for more time with my grandparents, money and good health.

Upton: Wish #1: An end to terrorist movements

Wish #2: Longer summers in Wyoming

Wish #3: To have a spot in a Star Wars film

If you could hold any job you wanted, what would it be, and why?

Skala: I would like to be a professional basketball player so I could get paid to play basketball.

Upton: Anything that involves being creative and making something out of nothing. Woodworking sculpture, drawing etc. It would be also nice to make a decent living doing these things as well.

Where do you see yourself in 20 years?

Skala: Retired from the military and Assistant Chief of firefighting on the state side.

Upton: Hopefully retired and spending time with my family and continuing to explore new hobbies.

Finish this sentence: I think the most important thing in life is ...?

Skala: Family.

Upton: FAMILY. And not just in the blood relation sense. My family is very important to me, I put them before everything and I love them very much. However I also have a family here in the Wyoming Military. They have been there through a large portion of my life and I have many people I can call my brothers and sisters.



Senior Airman Tyler Skala



Staff Sgt. Christopher Upton

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Keep cool and smart about energy use this summer

By Jim Bob Schell
WyARNG Energy Manager

As the season changes to more pleasant weather a new wave of energy challenges face us. The main energy factors you can control are the use of natural light, using passive cooling methods, and effectively using mechanical cooling.

Due to the varied nature of facilities throughout the WyARNG it is important to consider which factors you can control, and focus on them.

During the long summer hours we have full light during the work day. Whenever possible utilize the natural light of the day and keep your lights off. This serves two purposes: it reduces electricity and the internal heat load in your work space. Not all of us have access to daylight, especially those of us in cubicles, but you can look to turn off other lights in well-lit spaces.

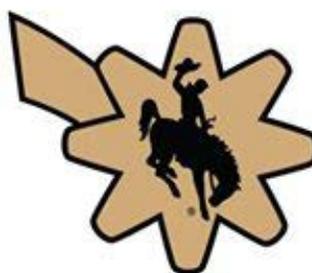
Maintaining comfortable temperatures in your workspace is critical for a productive day. When possible passive cooling techniques should be employed. Reducing solar heat gain by lowering the blinds, is particularly effective for south-facing windows. There is a trade off with maximize day-lighting in the work space, but when it is hot from sunlight, it is better to lower the shades and turn on lights. The less heat gained the less cooling work must be done to maintain a comfortable space.

Modern buildings prohibit many of us from opening windows at work, but for those of us who can, please be mindful of which windows or doors are open, and when. It is also important to not mix open windows and doors with mechanical cooling. If the air conditioner is on, close the doors for the most effective and energy efficient cooling.

Remember the WyARNG FY16 Energy Reduction Competition is ongoing. Using these techniques could help you and your coworkers earn 16 hours of leave.

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Burning daylight at the WyANG FD

Story and photos by Capt. Megan Hoffmann
Wyoming Military Department Public Affairs



Brenton Ness, firefighter with the Wyoming Air National Guard fire department, extends a hull-piercing boom to practice piercing the skin of an aircraft to extinguish a fire inside should one occur on June 20, 2016. At right, Ness instructs other members on the capabilities and functions of the rapid intervention vehicle, used in aircraft rescue, urban search and rescue and hazmat response.

Graveyards. Swings. Splits. Firefighters at the Wyoming Air National Guard work all those shifts combined and then some during their normal 48-hour shift. It's not unusual to find them responding to a fire somewhere in Laramie County or to an in-flight-emergency with an aircraft preparing to land. At 2 a.m. During hour 43 of their 48-hour shift. They are there, always.

"We might be sound-asleep in the middle of the night when a call comes in. Within three minutes we have to have all our gear on and be headed out to the flight line or to wherever the response might be," said Paul Stern, crew chief with the Wyoming Air National Guard Fire Department.

During a typical 48-hour shift, a shift change will occur at 7 a.m. followed by each member of the 8-9 member shift reading individual assignments in the alarm

room, retrieving their gear – all 60 pounds of it – and placing it on their assigned truck, and performing operational checks on the vehicles. They also train, exercise, eat, sleep and spend time with the same personnel assigned to their 48-hour shift, whom they see every four to five days.

"We always have to communicate with each other. Shift change is all about gaining that situational awareness of what has happened in the last day or two and what's going on now and into the future," said Nick Johnson, also a crew chief.

But what happens when the Air Guard fire department isn't in the midst of a shift-change or getting ready within their three-minute time limit to respond to an actual fire? In 2015, they were activated for 67 service calls on base, fielding an average of one call once every 5 1/2 days. However, the days without

a service call on base quickly snowballs when factoring in all their other responses. Like the 468 runway checks they did to ensure there were no foreign obstacle debris on the flight line and that all the lighting along the runway was functioning properly. Or the 106 calls they fielded in support of city and county fire departments as part of Domestic Support to Civil Authorities and the mutual aid agreements they hold with those Wyoming agencies.

As part of these agreements, Air National Guard Fire Department assets can respond anywhere within Cheyenne city limits and Laramie County, but primarily respond with Laramie County Fire District 2, a large area north of Interstate 80 and mostly east of Interstate 25.

"The mutual aid agreements that we hold with other rural fire districts, to include F.E. Warren and the City of Cheyenne, are hugely beneficial. We have spent several years now building those relationships and getting in that facetime in order to understand one another's capabilities, strengths and weaknesses and build trust. It's mutually beneficial as we can both offer one another equipment and capabilities that the other entity might not have," said Dirk Deshaney, station captain.

Deshaney explained that the partnership with local fire districts didn't always exist and how fortunate they feel to now have a strong partnership that brings diversity and strengthens the holistic effort in fire prevention and suppression.

"I trust the personnel working



female employee, highlighted the unique training and equipment that her department brings to the table.

“Some people think we only exist for fire protection when in reality we are an all-hazards service and can also provide

between agencies and the diversity of equipment and personnel is synergistic.

“When you are a part of the fire service you are a part of something much greater than yourself, we call it the brotherhood. We all form a very strong bond with each other because we have a dangerous job and we have a responsibility to each other to keep everyone safe. We proudly wear the Maltese Cross (the firefighter emblem) and if you see a complete stranger walking down the street with a Maltese Cross you will automatically feel as if you have a connection with them,” said Raile.

Whether it be a graveyard, swing, or split, the fire department personnel work all of them during a routine 48-hour shift and will be there to assist members of the 153rd Airlift Wing, the City of Cheyenne and Laramie County, when called upon. √

for other fire districts. If we send one of our guys into a fire, I feel comfortable sending anyone from another fire district in along with them in order to get the mission done,” he said.

“We have to be ready at a moment’s notice to respond when the call comes. Our priorities remain life safety, incident stabilization and property conservation,” added Johnson.

Kelsey Raile, another department crew chief and the only full-time

emergency medical services, hazardous materials mitigation and control, urban search and rescue capabilities, public education and facility fire safety inspections.”

Each fire department leans on the other for support Raile said. The Air Guard offers various support elements that can’t be found in the civilian sector, likewise, the county fire districts offer advanced life support personnel and equipment, like ladder trucks, that are not found at the Air Guard. The partnership



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